



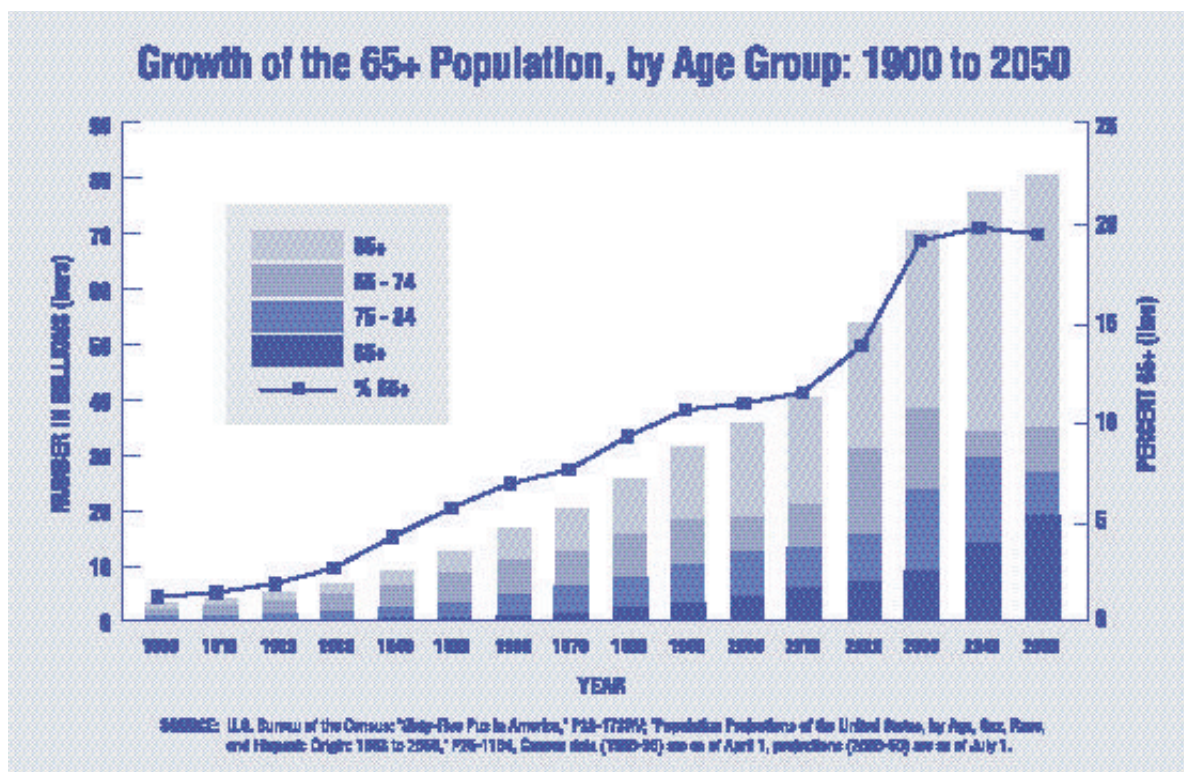
ADMINISTRATION ON AGING

The Growth of America's Older Population

The United States has long been considered a nation of youth. In its colonial past, half of the nation's inhabitants were under the age of 16. Most people never reached old age as we know it today. Even by 1900, life expectancy was only 47 years. Fortunately, times have changed. Most newborns can now expect to survive their infancy, and many Americans live into their eighth decade. With these increases in health and longevity come the need to reevaluate our national self-image. America is not only a nation of youth, but also one of age.

An Aging Society

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, America's population aged 65 or older grew by 82 percent between 1965 and 1995. Between 1980 and 1995, this same population grew by 28 percent to a historical high of 33.5 million people. Currently, one in eight Americans is 65 years of age or older. And while less than 25 percent of the population is younger than age 15, another 57 percent is aged 30 or older. Clearly, the proportion of older citizens is growing and will continue to do so with the aging of the baby boomers.



O L D E R A M E R I C A N S M O N T H 1 9 9 7



The “Oldest-Old”—A Rapidly Increasing Subpopulation

The “oldest-old” is defined as people who are at least 85 years old. This group is the fastest-growing segment of America’s senior citizen population. The number of persons aged 85 and older has more than doubled since 1965 and has grown by 40 percent since 1980. The number of centenarians—people at least 100 years old—more than doubled during the 1980’s. Although the oldest-old category currently constitutes only 1 percent of the total U.S. population, this segment is having a major impact on the nation’s health care and social service delivery systems, as well as the American family.

For more information about AoA and its programs, please contact:

Executive Secretariat
Administration on Aging
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C. 20201

Phone: (202) 619-0724
Fax: (202) 260-1012
TDD: (202) 401-7575

Email: aoa_esec@ban-gate.aoa.dhhs.gov
Internet Website: <http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov>

The Aging of the Baby Boomers

The 75 million people born in the United States between 1946 and 1964 constitute the baby boom generation. In 1994, baby boomers represented nearly one-third of the U.S. population. Within the next 13 to 34 years, these people will enter the 65-years-and-older age category. As the baby boomers begin to age, the United States will see an unparalleled increase in the absolute number of elderly persons. While one in eight Americans was 65 years of age or older in 1994, in a little more than 30 years, about one in five is expected to be in this age group.

The U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) is encouraging planners and policy makers to prepare now for the aging of the baby boomers so that the nation is prepared to meet the challenges that will ensue as this unprecedentedly large generation begins reaching age 65.